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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Pedro Comissário (Mozambique), opened the meeting and extended a special welcome to the newly elected members of the Executive Committee: Armenia, Chad, Georgia and Uruguay, which were elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council during its Coordination and Management Meeting on 8 April 2015. The Vice-Chairperson, His Excellency Ambassador Carsten Staur (Denmark), chaired the meeting on 25 June. During the meeting, the following countries were admitted as observers: the Dominican Republic, Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The Committee adopted the agenda for the meeting (EC/66/SC/CRP.9).

III. International protection

3. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) provided an overview of the agenda item, citing the growing magnitude of global displacement and the unprecedented protection challenges, including the shrinking of asylum space on all continents, complex maritime movements, willful denial of protection and widespread forced recruitment of children. He called on States to embrace the fundamental values upon which societies were founded, encompassed in the rule of law, in order to respond to such challenges. With respect to mixed maritime movements, he stressed that protection at sea must begin with protection on land and called for collective, far-reaching and comprehensive approaches based on the fundamental principles of humanity, access to asylum, solidarity and respect for human rights. He also emphasized that border security and refugee protection were not mutually exclusive and that measures aimed at deterring people from seeking asylum were ineffective and at variance with international law. The Assistant High Commissioner highlighted the advancements made in protection in UNHCR's operations, including in the areas of child protection and statelessness, but cautioned that resource constraints were making it difficult to achieve results in some situations.

A. Note on international protection

4. The Director of the Division of International Protection presented the note on international protection (EC/66/SC/CRP.10) and its underlying theme of the rule of law. She stressed that rule of law deficits generated displacement and that strengthening the rule of law was vital to addressing the root causes of conflict and lifting obstacles to return. She highlighted a number of positive developments in some countries, including new asylum legislation, the establishment of fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures, measures taken to ensure access to documentation and to justice, and the use of alternatives to detention.

5. The Committee recognized the important role of the rule of law in addressing the root causes of conflict and achieving durable solutions. UNHCR was encouraged to continue its work in helping countries build national protection systems based on the rule of law.

6. Alarm was expressed over the multiple large-scale emergencies and escalating protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In the face of these challenges, the system of international protection had to be innovative, dynamic and

capable of harnessing new ideas. A number of delegations expressed support for recent initiatives taken by UNHCR to improve protection outcomes, including alternatives to camps, livelihoods and biometric registration. Current emergencies offered opportunities to explore new forms of protection, such as humanitarian visas and community-based sponsorships.

7. Delegations were concerned that as the number of displaced persons continued to soar, so did the pressure to close borders. In this context, support was reiterated for UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, which continued to serve as a useful tool for addressing asylum and migration issues. UNHCR was urged to expand efforts to strengthen the capacity of asylum countries by training law enforcement officials and border staff on the identification of persons in need of international protection.

8. The Committee deplored the tragic loss of life as a result of mixed movements by sea. It was emphasized that the number one priority had to be saving lives and that search and rescue operations were not a pull factor. At the same time, protection at sea could not be the responsibility of only a few States. The magnitude of the phenomenon required greater international cooperation, including with countries of origin and transit, to tackle the root causes of mixed flows and fight trafficking and smuggling. UNHCR was encouraged to promote the expanded use of resettlement to address the situation of refugees that were engaging in secondary movements by sea.

9. UNHCR was commended for its engagement in the preparatory process for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and its efforts to highlight the centrality of protection and the importance of strengthening collaboration with development actors to achieve solutions to protracted situations. At the same time, the Office was encouraged to underscore in the process the importance of strengthening international solidarity and burden-sharing, including support to host countries. Host countries were commended for opening their borders and observing the principle of non-refoulement, and there was recognition that these countries were struggling to cope and in need of more support. Protecting and assisting the people displaced by the many ongoing conflicts had to be shouldered collectively by the international community.

10. The Committee expressed concern that while displacement was at an all-time high, solutions were at an all-time low. One delegation stressed that the political will of States was key to peace and stability and to achieving solutions. In this regard, States welcomed the theme of root causes chosen for the High Commissioner's 2015 Dialogue on Protection Challenges. Addressing root causes was vital to achieving sustainable solutions.

11. There were numerous calls for strengthening the link between humanitarian and development assistance in countries of origin to promote conditions for voluntary repatriation and reintegration. UNHCR was encouraged to put forward ideas on how to break down the artificial barriers between the two domains and present recommendations based on best practice examples of cooperation with development partners.

12. With respect to the Sahrawi refugees living in the camps near Tindouf, one delegation emphasized the importance of sustainable solutions for the refugees within the framework of the UN peace plan and, in the meantime, the need for continued assistance and protection. Another delegation insisted on the fundamental need for the registration of the population, in line with recent United Nations Security Council resolutions, pending their return, and expressed concern about the diversion of humanitarian aid. One delegation stated that a rigorous system of controls was in place.

13. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) expressed appreciation for the support of the Committee and the many useful suggestions from Member States. In response to the numerous updates provided by States on measures being taken to build and

strengthen national asylum systems. he indicated that UNHCR looked forward to supporting these efforts. In response to a question about how to better tackle mixed flows, he emphasized the importance of regional initiatives that were appropriately tailored. In response to a question about restructuring of the Division of International Protection, the Director clarified that UNHCR was working to ensure that it was in a position to meet the extraordinary demands.

B. Update on statelessness

14. Presenting the update on statelessness (EC/66/SC/CRP.11), the Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection responsible for Pillar II (Protection Operational Support) described statelessness as a "glaring anomaly" that today affects at least 10 million people around the globe. With the launch of the campaign to end statelessness within a decade, UNHCR published a global action plan setting out ten actions through which States could resolve existing situations of statelessness and prevent new ones from emerging. The fact that several States had enabled over four million formerly stateless people to acquire nationality in the last decade was testament to what could be achieved. As the lack of birth registration was a factor contributing to childhood statelessness, UNHCR appreciated enhanced efforts by refugee hosting countries to ensure that birth certificates were issued to all refugee newborns.

15. The Committee welcomed the campaign and the Office's pragmatic and operational approach. Despite the significant progress made in accessions to the statelessness conventions, it was regrettable that there had been no recent breakthroughs in resolving situations of statelessness, and it was urged that the issue remain a priority. Concerns were expressed over the continued existence of gender discrimination in nationality laws, despite positive action by a number of countries to make their laws gender-neutral. The arbitrary deprivation of nationality and potential expulsion of stateless persons also emerged as an important issue during the discussion. Delegations emphasized that funding for the statelessness pillar of UNHCR's budget must be appropriately sustained.

16. Several delegations remarked upon the importance of regional collaboration to address statelessness. In this regard, delegations commended the inclusion of statelessness in the "Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action" as well as the "Sharjah Principles"; the adoption of the "Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness" at the first regional conference on statelessness in West Africa; and the convening of the First Global Forum on Statelessness.

17. The Deputy Director thanked delegations for highlighting progress in reforming nationality legislation. She reiterated UNHCR's commitment to working with civil society and undertaking participatory assessments. The Assistant High Commissioner assured delegations that addressing statelessness was a priority and that the Office was working to ensure adequate resources.

C. Alternatives to detention

18. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection responsible for Pillar I (Policy and Law) presented the conference room paper on alternatives to detention (EC/66/SC/CRP.12). She stressed that research had confirmed that the detention of asylum-seekers and refugees was harmful, costly and less effective than alternatives to detention. There were a number of good State practices in use from which lessons could be drawn.

19. UNHCR's focus on alternatives to detention and its five-year "Global strategy – beyond detention" were welcomed. The need to avoid detention of children was particularly emphasized. One delegation noted efforts being undertaken to minimize reliance on family detention, including through forward-leaning family case management programmes. UNHCR was requested to give further consideration to how States could balance border security concerns in the event of mass influxes, where the use of detention may be necessary, even while alternatives to detention remained the goal. One speaker suggested the need to develop a shared understanding on the meaning of alternatives to detention and to examine which practices were most effective while still protective of fundamental rights.

20. In response, UNHCR noted with appreciation steps taken in some countries to end the detention of asylum-seeking families. The Deputy Director said that in certain mass arrival situations, initial reception may need to occur in closed facilities, and indicated that UNHCR would look into the development of guidance for such situations, including screening tools.

D. Executive Committee conclusion

21. The Rapporteur of the Executive Committee introduced the discussion, noting that thus far there had been general support for the development of a multi-year work plan for conclusions on international protection, and that flexibility and balance in the themes would be required. The Rapporteur invited Member States to submit proposed themes by 29 June, in advance of the Committee's meeting on 10 July to discuss the proposals. The Senior Legal Coordinator of the Division of International Protection noted that UNHCR had identified four themes for the Committee's consideration in paragraph 26 of the note on international protection. These themes were proposed following a review of the existing 111 conclusions, which considered where there were gaps, such as youth empowerment and alternatives to detention, as well as where there had been important developments, such as convention travel documents.

22. In terms of the process, several delegations expressed their support for the adoption of a multi-year work plan, noting that a three-year work cycle – reviewed and updated annually – would provide flexibility while enabling better preparation. The Committee had successfully used such a work plan in past years. Several delegations noted concerns, particularly that the allocation of themes in advance should not prevent the Executive Committee from revising the work plan to respond to pressing issues. One delegation suggested that the multi-year work plan could instead be procedural in nature.

23. Concerning potential themes to be included in the work plan, a proposal for a conclusion on strengthening international solidarity with refugee host countries, preferably for adoption in 2015, found strong support. Delegations observed that the top 10 hosting countries now hosted over 8 million refugees; that most of these hosts were less-developed or developing countries; and the number of the forcibly displaced was at a record high while voluntary repatriation was at a long-term low. In this context, it was timely and important to explore how to reinforce international solidarity.

24. There also was strong support for themes to reflect a balance between protection and solutions, both of which are part of UNHCR's mandate. One delegation recalled that while durable solutions should be a priority for protracted refugee situations, it also was essential to look for "interim solutions" to minimize the daily suffering of refugees pending the achievement of durable solutions. It was noted that the framing of each theme and its specific content would be important to enable consensus among Member States. One delegation requested that UNHCR identify specific areas within its proposed themes where further guidance would be useful for its work. Several delegations reiterated their support

for negotiating a conclusion in 2015 but acknowledged the limited time to do so before the Committee's plenary session in early October.

25. The Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) observed that the Executive Committee, through its conclusions, had a proud tradition of addressing gaps in standards for issues not specifically regulated by the international protection regime. The Executive Committee is the worldwide forum that provides a strong voice on matters of protection and specific humanitarian issues. Because the responsibility to provide protection, assistance and solutions lies with States, the conclusions provide the Committee with a means to provide guidance to the international community as a whole – not just UNHCR – in meeting this responsibility.

26. The Rapporteur appreciated the various comments made. He agreed that the multi-year work plan should be flexible and seek to balance needs in the areas of protection and solutions. He also recalled that the consideration of a procedural work plan had not gained consensus several years ago and so did not wish to revive that process. Instead, a multi-year work plan of themes could facilitate the Committee's work just as the "Agenda for Protection" had successfully provided themes for its future work more than ten years ago. The Vice-Chairperson recalled the distinguished track record of the Executive Committee in producing soft law interpretations that build the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to provide guidance and support to governments on how international protection standards are interpreted and applied by States. He expressed the hope that the Committee would be able to continue this practice through the multi-year work plan.

IV. Programme/protection policy

A. Solution strategies

27. Introducing the conference room paper on solution strategies (EC/66/SC/CRP.15), the Deputy High Commissioner observed that the number of people displaced by conflict and persecution was growing, not only because of more violence and conflict, but also because fewer solutions were being found. Nearly 50 per cent of the refugees of concern to the Office were in protracted situations, a ratio that was expected to increase as several recent emergencies were approaching the threshold of becoming protracted. All actors had an incentive to find alternatives to this scenario, including the refugees themselves, the States who host them, and those providing humanitarian assistance, as more funding was required for long-term care and maintenance.

28. The Deputy High Commissioner elaborated upon the Office's efforts to effectively leverage support for solutions, including "Seeds for Solutions" funding and the expansion of the Solutions Alliance to include national-level working groups. The Office was also enhancing its work in "pre-solution" situations, to prepare refugees for sustainable solutions. It was critical to ensure that children were educated, that people were trained through livelihood initiatives, and that the displaced could become self-reliant, in preparation for the time when they could return home, integrate locally (if agreed by the host State) or resettle. At the same time, the international community needed to think beyond the three traditional solutions to expand other opportunities, including labour migration, regional visa programmes and alternative stay arrangements.

29. Delegations were broadly supportive of UNHCR's work on solutions. With the average time of displacement reaching 17 years, and more than 40,000 people displaced per day in 2014, redoubled efforts, as well as new and innovative approaches, were required. Delegations recognized the importance of engaging a broad array of partners, particularly development actors, as well as the private sector. The rights of refugees and the needs of

host communities should be taken into consideration in all development plans. Support from the World Bank had been helpful in the process of locally integrating Angolan refugees in Zambia, and several governments had provided valuable bilateral development support inside Somalia. Several delegations observed that voluntary return remained the preferred solution and regretted the low levels of returns in recent years. Better linkages between humanitarian and development efforts in countries of origin would help create conditions conducive to voluntary and sustainable return.

30. Delegations recognized the benefits of regional strategies, expressing appreciation for the Global Initiative for Somali Refugees and encouraging the Office to launch similar initiatives for other refugee situations before they became protracted. Planning for solutions from the onset of displacement was important, and several delegations welcomed the Office's use of multi-year "protection and solutions strategies." UNHCR was encouraged to provide multi-year funding for work on solutions. At the same time, attention must be paid to "interim solutions," pending the achievement of durable solutions. Building the resilience and social and economic autonomy of refugees should be prioritized; refugees must not be treated as passive, powerless beneficiaries. Pending the conditions for voluntary and sustainable return, refugees should enjoy their fundamental rights, including freedom of movement and access to education and livelihoods. Collaboration with development actors was equally crucial in the context of interim solutions, to ensure inclusion of the needs of both refugees as well as the communities hosting them.

31. Resettlement States were encouraged to offer more places and to apply criteria for resettlement flexibly, in the spirit of solidarity and responsibility-sharing with host States, particularly less-developed countries. Several delegations urged that solutions should be central to the agenda of the international community at the World Humanitarian Summit.

32. In response, the Deputy High Commissioner underscored that humanitarian organizations could not achieve solutions on their own, and he appreciated the increasingly successful efforts of development actors, national governments and bilateral donors in ensuring that development plans and strategies were inclusive of the displaced and their host communities. Old notions of a "handover from relief to development" were misplaced; humanitarians and development actors must work together. The "handover", if any, must be one from relief to dignity.

B. Refugee public health, including HIV/AIDS

33. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management presented the update on refugee public health, including HIV/AIDS (EC/66/SC/CRP.16). He reported on progress achieved during the second year of implementation of UNHCR's five-year "Global strategy on public health," noting that in 2015 the Office was driving forward the key strategic objectives in field operations, with a focus on improving quality and ensuring that health programming was cost-effective and evidence-based. He described some of the critical public health interventions carried out by UNHCR and its partners in the field and their impact.

34. Delegations recognized UNHCR's efforts in leveraging partnerships to strengthen public health interventions in emergencies and encouraged it to continue this practice. Together with partners, UNHCR was commended for integrating mental health and psychosocial support into health programming, improving reproductive health care, and preventing malnutrition and promoting food security in refugee settings. UNHCR was urged to take further steps to address the needs of women and girls, to provide emergency health care in the case of SGBV, and to strengthen the role of women and girls in identifying their own needs. Regarding reproductive health care, concern was expressed

over government policies in some countries which prevented refugees and nationals alike from accessing health services. The Office was encouraged to further roll out its biometrics system in order to support the effective use of scare resources and to ensure that all of its efforts were inclusive of persons with disabilities.

35. The Director thanked delegations for their support and further underscored the importance UNHCR attached to working with partners to achieve the strategic objectives. In response to a comment about the need to conduct nutrition surveys on a more predictable basis, he assured delegations that while fewer surveys had been conducted this year, this did not reflect a lack of engagement, and that the Office had been working on improving practices to include urban and other out-of-camp settings. The Deputy Director of the Division, who oversees the Public Health, Operational Solutions and Transition, and Shelter and Settlement Sections, emphasized UNHCR's efforts to include women and girls in needs assessments, citing a number of means being employed to achieve this.

C. Community-based protection and age, gender and diversity

36. The Deputy Director, a.i., of the Division of International Protection, responsible for Pillar III (Comprehensive Solutions) presented the conference room paper on community-based protection and age, gender and diversity (EC/66/SC/CRP.17). She stressed the importance of working with persons of concern, learning from them, and empowering them to play a leading role in their own protection and eventually solutions. This was the goal of UNHCR's community-based protection approach. She outlined the progress made in advancing this goal in a number of operations and highlighted UNHCR's efforts to promote youth empowerment.

37. States recognized the value of the community-based approach in ensuring that UNHCR engages with communities and uses local knowledge to strengthen capacities and enhance protection. Delegations underscored the role of youth in their communities and praised UNHCR's "Youth Initiative Fund" projects that tap into their potential, build their capacities, and promote harmonious relations with local communities. It was recognized that supporting youth's self-reliance through socio-economic empowerment was particularly important; when youth were able to lead an active life, accessing livelihood opportunities, they were better prepared for eventual solutions and less dependent upon humanitarian assistance. Many States also acknowledged progress achieved in the areas of SGBV prevention and response.

38. The Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Framework was acknowledged as an essential means for ensuring that UNHCR meets its accountability to persons of concern. While acknowledging progress achieved in strengthening the accountability framework, a number of delegations urged the Office to better ensure the participation of persons of concern in post-assessment phases of the programming cycle and to promote the use of the accountability framework among partners. Particular concern was expressed over the timely publication of the "Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report" for 2014. In addition, the Office was encouraged to promote greater gender equality and share information on its reporting to the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

39. UNHCR was asked to provide a detailed update on its work on disabilities in 2016, as well as to inform the Committee of its progress toward key commitments made in the 2013 conference room paper on community-based protection (EC/64/SC/CRP.14). The introduction of the new function and job description of Protection Officer (Community-based) was praised, and the Office was asked to report back to the Committee on its implementation in due course. One delegation inquired whether there was an agreed

definition of the term "diversity," while several expressed reservation that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) was part of the definition.

40. The Deputy Director, a.i., expressed appreciation for the extensive engagement of Committee members on these issues. She took note of areas where improvements were needed. In particular, she explained that UNHCR's systems, such as the results-based management tool Focus, were capable of gathering sex and age-disaggregated data, adding that further advancements will be made with the support of the Division of Programme Support and Management. She emphasized that UNHCR also will focus on structured processes to achieve greater accountability towards persons of concern in the programme cycle. Responding to a question on the involvement of men and boys in SGBV prevention, the Deputy Director, a.i., observed that the multi-year "Safe from the Start" initiative had helped protect women and girls through a wide range of prevention activities from the onset of emergencies. While recognizing gaps on financial tracking, she noted that UNHCR's efforts on reporting to UN-SWAP were ongoing. Since 2013, the community-based workforce realignment had strengthened efforts to integrate community-based protection in programming and partnerships. Responding to questions on the definition of diversity, the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) explained that, since its inception and pursuant to the refugee definition, UNHCR's core work was to protect persons of concern to the Office based on individual characteristics, including age, gender, belonging to a minority group, disability, as well as sexual orientation and gender identity.

D. Update on the global strategic priorities

41. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management presented the conference room paper on the global strategic priorities (GSPs) (EC/66/SC/CRP.18). He introduced the GSPs for the 2016-2017 biennium, noting that the High Commissioner had made very few changes in the interest of continuity and bearing in mind that reporting of the first year of the current biennium had not yet been received and analysed. The eight GSPs had, therefore, been retained but new or revised indicators were introduced to better measure progress on statelessness, efforts to promote the issuance of birth certificates and solutions in a more qualitative way. The Deputy Director of the Division, who coordinates the reporting on the GSPs, reviewed the progress made thus far on the 2014 GSPs and the challenges in achieving them. While overall, operations had made good progress across all of the GSP areas, analysis showed that significant challenges remained in the areas of education, shelter and solutions.

42. Member States were pleased to see progress made against the GSPs of the current biennium, particularly against the protection-related operational GSPs and the support and management GSPs, and expressed support for the overall continuity for 2016-2017. UNHCR was urged to include impact indicators to measure progress in the protection of people with disabilities, to re-establish reproductive health care as a priority, and to place greater emphasis on reintegration and expanding solutions, particularly in protracted situations, including through comprehensive approaches. The Office was further encouraged to give the highest attention to GSPs that promoted human potential through education, skills development and entrepreneurship in order to build the capacity of refugees and prepare them for return, resettlement or local integration. With respect to the more detailed progress report on the 2014 GSPs[1] which supplemented the conference room paper, while one delegation noted that none of the eight operational GSPs had been fully

[1] The progress report on the 2014 GSPs is available from http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2014%20-%20GSP%20Progress%20Report.pdf.

achieved, another delegation pointed out that this was not only about progress made by UNHCR but was also a reflection of the progress or lack of progress made by States.

43. The Director acknowledged that more work needed to be done in achieving the GSPs and thanked the Committee for the useful suggestions, including with respect to the progress report and the need to better capture how prioritization was done. He assured the Committee that although some important areas were not specifically included in the indicators, this did not mean that important work was not being done and that there was room for discussion on how this could be captured in UNHCR's overall reporting. The Deputy Director also explained that, as the GSPs covered a broad range of UNHCR's activities, the report was designed to give a high-level picture of the progress that had been made. More detailed reporting by operations and on specific sectors could be found in other sources, including Global Focus and the Global Report. He welcomed the suggestion for a more detailed discussion with States on the progress report.

V. Regional activities and global programmes

A. Innovation: Cash-based interventions

44. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management presented the conference room paper contained in EC/66/SC/CRP.13, noting that the expanded and systematic use of cash-based interventions (CBIs) was an institutional priority for UNHCR.

45. Several delegations welcomed UNHCR's efforts to reinforce its institutional capacity in this area, including through the elaboration of a five-year strategic plan. It was emphasized that CBIs can be a flexible, effective and efficient mechanism for the delivery of assistance, respecting the dignity and autonomy of recipients while also contributing to local economies. Delegations cautioned that the choice of assistance modality should be based on assessment of the particular operational context, and that the use of "in-kind" assistance may be more suitable in some situations or at the outset of emergencies. The importance of robust monitoring and evaluation systems was noted by several delegations. UNHCR's work with partners was welcomed, particularly the World Food Programme (WFP), although the Office was encouraged to better coordinate cash-based programming across agencies and sectors. One delegation noted UNHCR's development of a repository of best practices and asked whether this would be shared externally.

46. The Director welcomed the support for UNHCR's work on CBIs. UNHCR shared the concerns raised by delegations in terms of ensuring that CBIs were being appropriately used and agreed with the importance of monitoring and evaluation. The Chief of UNHCR's CBI Section affirmed that the selection of assistance modality must be context specific, respect beneficiary choice and dignity, and be consistent with the mandate of the Office.

B. UNHCR's communications strategy

47. Presenting the conference room paper on UNHCR's communications strategy (EC/66/SC/CRP.14), the Director of the Division of External Relations explained that UNHCR's global communications sought to raise awareness and mobilize public, political and financial support for refugees and other persons of concern to the Office. The global communications strategy was an overarching framework for strategic messaging through traditional media and emerging technologies. A particular area of focus was to tell the stories of uprooted people and the communities that hosted them.

48. Delegations reacted positively to UNHCR's efforts to expand the reach of its communications. One delegation suggested that the Office ensure that staff with public information experience be placed in key operations and that communications training be integrated into emergency management training. The Office was encouraged to continue outreach to and engagement with new and more diverse groups, including national audiences. One delegation expressed concern about the use of funds to elevate UNHCR's "brand recognition", underscoring that the Office's reputation should be derived from its long experience of assisting and protecting refugees. Several delegations showed interest in further updates on UNHCR's communications strategy.

49. The Director and the Head of the Communications and Public Information Service thanked delegations for their support and feedback. They reiterated the importance of individual stories to establish an emotional connection and prompt audiences to reflect on the needs of the populations. The Deputy High Commissioner added that it was a challenge to align staff worldwide with a core set of messages and praised the achievements of his colleagues in substantially strengthening UNHCR's global communications in recent years.

VI. Programme budgets and funding

50. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the agenda item, highlighting the financial constraints currently faced by UNHCR. Cost containment measures had been taken already in response to foreign exchange rate losses and decreased revenue projections. As a result of the continued gap between needs and funds available, UNHCR needed to explore all possibilities for funding. The Deputy High Commissioner noted that the Office was reviewing the 7 per cent programme support cost policy, which currently applies to pillars 3 and 4, as well as to funding for supplementary budgets, and considering applying it across the board to all funding, including pillars 1 and 2. This would help counter the increased levels of earmarked and tightly earmarked funding that UNHCR was receiving and would help secure funds for urgent projects. UNHCR hoped to have further discussions with Member States on the subject.

A. Update on budgets and funding

51. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management and the Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) jointly presented the update on budgets and funding for 2014 and 2015 (EC/66/SC/CRP.19). The Controller reviewed the financial situation in 2014 and provided an update on the 2015 budget approved by the Executive Committee in October 2014, noting that nine supplementary budgets had since been established in 2015. The Director of DER indicated that, despite the high level of funding, the gap between the 2014 budget and the contributions received amounted to some US$ 2,966.6 million. He cited examples of the impact in various operations and highlighted the significant shortfall projected for 2015, in part due to major currency fluctuations. The Chairman urged delegations to support the global needs-based budget and stressed the importance of early and unearmarked funding.

52. Delegations expressed concern about the widening gap between needs and funds available and acknowledged the importance of early and flexible funding. At the same time, there was a request for additional and more specific information about how unearmarked funding was used. UNHCR provided good information about how the needs were calculated and the funding sources, but more information on expenditures was critical for governments to continue advocating public support for unearmarked funding. The Global Focus website could be enhanced with this kind of information. UNHCR was also urged to remain diligent over the use of funds, particularly given the expansion in activities

over the past year. The Office was also encouraged to continue expanding its donor base in order to meet the growing needs. Responding to the Deputy High Commissioner's remarks on revisiting the programme support cost policy, the Committee asked for more information about what it would be used for and to which contributions it would apply, and requested further discussion on the issue.

53. The Controller expressed appreciation for the support of the Committee and reiterated the importance of unearmarked funding, stating that without it, UNHCR would have not been able to respond as effectively to the unprecedented needs with an implementation rate of 93 per cent. She acknowledged the need for further work on reporting against unearmarked funding and indicated that UNHCR was working on it. In terms of a question on internal audit, she clarified that a memorandum of understanding had been established with the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to provide UNHCR with internal audit capacity. The Director of DER confirmed that UNHCR was committed to further diversifying donor funding and pursuing innovative ways to deliver humanitarian assistance. Responding to a question about additional supplementary budgets presently foreseen, the Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service noted that UNHCR expected additional needs for Burundi.

54. The draft decision on funding and budgets for 2014 and 2015 was adopted (see annex).

B. UNHCR Global Report 2014

55. The Director of the Division of External Relations presented UNHCR's Global Report on activities in 2014. He noted that the report was designed to meet the reporting requirements of as many of the Office's supporters as possible and that the Global Focus website, which was launched in 2015, provided more detailed information, including on results, impact and gaps. The Director stressed that while UNHCR was working to broaden its donor base, with 82 per cent of its voluntary contributions coming from its top 10 donors, the Office depended on sustained support from these sources.

56. Delegations recognized the significant challenges in bringing together information on diverse geographic and sectoral activities in a coherent manner and the increasing efforts made by UNHCR to respond to the information requests made by States, including in the Global Focus website. Timely and thorough reporting was necessary to instil confidence that funds were being well spent and to build trust in imparting flexible funding. The Office was encouraged to use data that was disaggregated by sex, age and disability and to report on ways in which the Office prioritized its work. The Director concluded with words of appreciation for the continuous dialogue with States and noted the suggestions made.

VII. Governance

57. The Committee was reminded that the High Commissioner's opening statement at the forthcoming sixty-sixth plenary session of the Executive Committee would form the basis of the session's general debate. Delegations were invited to propose topics, noting that suggestions could be transmitted to the Secretary in writing in the weeks following the meeting.

VIII. Any other business

58. The Chairperson recalled the Committee's decision to adopt its reports by electronic circulation. He advised that the Secretariat would circulate the draft report of the

sixty-third meeting by 16 July and asked that delegations wishing to make comments or corrections to the language relating to their interventions did so within two weeks. The report would be amended as appropriate, following which it would be recirculated and deemed adopted.

59. With reference to the forthcoming sixty-sixth plenary session of the Executive Committee, the Secretary noted that, as in previous years, the High Commissioner and Chairperson would co-host the welcoming reception, which would precede the Nansen Refugee Award ceremony at the *Bâtiment des Forces Motrices* in Geneva. UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award team would send invitations during the course of the summer.

60. The Chairperson thanked the Deputy High Commissioner for his five years of service at UNHCR and expressed his deep appreciation for his accompaniment during meetings of the Standing Committee, bringing expert knowledge, support and tremendous value to its work and discussions. He wished him every success in future endeavours.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2014 and 2015

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision on administrative, financial and programme matters at its sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions (A/AC.96/1132, para. 15 and A/AC.96/1143, para. 13, respectively), as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding agenda item at the sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2015,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

1. *Takes note* of the final total budget for 2014 of $6,569.7 million, after the Executive Committee had approved programmes and budgets under UNHCR's 2014-2015 Biennial Programme Budget for $5,307.8 million for 2014, plus eight supplementary budgets amounting to $1,261.9 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons had been established in the course of 2014;

2. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fifth session, approved programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's revised 2014-2015 Biennial Programme Budget amounting to $6,234.4 million for 2015;

3. *Notes* that the 2015 supplementary budgets currently amount to $823.9 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

4. *Notes* that the annual budget for 2015 decreased by $158.4 million in the Middle East and North Africa region;

5. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2015 to a current total of $6,899.9 million;

6. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2015 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets, and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs; and

7. *Urges* Member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the 2015 annual budget.